



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Adenovirus

What is Adenovirus?

Adenoviruses most commonly cause respiratory illness, such as the common cold, bronchitis, and pneumonia. They may also cause other illnesses, such as gastroenteritis, eye infections, bladder inflammation, and rash illness. Severe illnesses can occur in newborn or older patients or in patients with medical conditions, but infection does not appear to be life-threatening in healthy adults. Some strains may cause more severe illness than others strains. Patients with weakened immune systems may have severe complications of adenovirus infection. There are 51 types of this virus that can cause human infections. The A14 strain was first identified to cause respiratory disease in military recruits in Europe in 1969 but was not very common. In 2007, this strain was found to cause many cases of illness in the U.S., with some of them being very severe. Viruses change as they multiply and are spread from one person to another. Different strains circulate at different times based on movements of people and people's immunity to these different strains.

Adenovirus is not a reportable disease therefore there are no numbers to report.

What are the symptoms of Adenovirus?

Symptoms include common cold symptoms such as runny nose, sinus congestion, sore throat, pink eye and cough. More severe infections may include shortness of breath, pneumonia, wheezing, chest pain, and fever. Symptoms of gastroenteritis may include vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. Symptoms usually occur 3-5 days after exposure.

How is Adenovirus spread?

They are transmitted in different ways depending on the type of infection. Adenoviruses that cause respiratory and eye infections are spread by contact with

an infected person's eyes, nose, or mouth. Adenoviruses that cause gastroenteritis are transmitted by contact with an infected person's feces (stool).

Who is at risk for getting Adenovirus?

Anyone can get infected. Infants and people with weakened immune systems or have respiratory or cardiac disease are at higher risk of getting sick. You can get infected by having close contact with people who are infected with these viruses. You can also get infected by touching objects that have virus on them then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

How do I know if I have Adenovirus?

See your health care provider. Your health care provider may order lab tests to see if you have an infection.

How is Adenovirus treated?

Most infections are mild and require no therapy. Symptoms resolve on their own. Treatment focuses on relieving the symptoms. Serious illnesses are managed by treating symptoms and complications of the infection. Several antiviral drugs have been used to treat serious infections, such as those caused by strain A14.

How is Adenovirus prevented?

Since no vaccine exists, strict attention to good hand washing and respiratory etiquette are the best way to prevent from getting ill. Frequent and thorough hand washing are most important. Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, and discard used tissues promptly. Stay home if you are ill, and children who are ill should not attend school or child care. Proper sleep and healthy eating are also important.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/adenovirus/>

This page was last reviewed March 12, 2013.